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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000646

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [KCRM](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [UK](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ,S EFFECTIVE SECURITY RESPONSE TO THE GOLDEN  
MOSQUE BOMBING

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David M. Satterfield for reasons 1.4 (C) and (D).

11. (S//REL MNFI) SUMMARY: The GOI's national security apparatus and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), supported by the U.S. and UK embassies and MNF-I, performed well in most areas of Iraq that experienced sectarian violence following the February 22 bombing in Samarra. The GOI's tactics were mostly successful in maintaining order, but some, such as the ban on public display of weapons, have yet to be enforced. Sunni Arabs are still highly skeptical of Ministry of Interior (MOI) police forces and have urged a stronger Coalition Force (CF) or Iraqi Army (IA) presence in some neighborhoods. Militias took advantage of the situation to flaunt their presence in the streets, without significant challenge from legitimate security forces. Reports from Basrah in particular indicated that the ISF were conspicuously absent, relative to Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaish al Mahdi (JAM) militia, for the first two days after the Samarra attack. A confrontation with JAM could develop if ISF and CF enforce the weapons ban. END SUMMARY.

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GOI LEADERSHIP  
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12. (U) After the February 22 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, widespread violence did not break out in large part due to effective actions by the GOI, calls for calm from leaders across Iraq, and the performance of the ISF. PM Jafari's initial calls for unity and for Iraqis to block those aiming to spark sectarian violence, which were supported and at times overshadowed by similar public announcements by senior religious leaders, reassured the country and limited sectarian violence.

13. (S//REL MNFI) The GOI's security measures included curfews and a security plan led by the ISF. In some instances, ISF heeded Sunni Arab sensitivity to a heavy MOI presence and substituted IA or CF for the police. Judicious use of extended nighttime curfews (February 23-27), no-notice daytime curfews (February 24-26), and control of vehicle access to Baghdad facilitated the maintenance of order. According to some reports, ISF was slow to enforce the curfew on the first two days but by February 25 had imposed stricter enforcement. We also received accounts of militias flouting the curfew in some areas, without challenge. Jafari proposed a ban on public display of weapons by non-security forces, but this measure has yet to be enforced.

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ISF PERFORMANCE  
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¶4. (U) IA and IP performance contributed substantially to keeping demonstrations peaceful and contained. Overall, ISF adhered to their mission rather than a sectarian agenda. According to MNF-I, ISF-implemented crowd controls proved largely effective and demonstrated real improvements in ISF planning, coordinating, and executing security missions. IP and IA coordinated in a timely and effective manner, moving to key locations to control demonstrations without themselves inciting violence. IP handled a number of real and fake IEDs around demonstrations and religious sites.

¶5. (S//REL MNFI) Despite capable performance in independent and joint operations, ISF performance required CF support to be fully effective. In general, ISF first responders established an inner cordon around an area to control violence, and CF set up an outer cordon to contain the situation.

¶6. (S//REL MNFI) Although the IA performed well, the IP had mixed results, according to MNF-I division commanders. This is due partly to the army having more training and experience than the police and because some IP units are populated by militia members. Overall, major subordinate command (MSC) division commanders evaluated IP performance outside of Baghdad as much better than units inside Baghdad. In addition, according to Sunni interlocutors, Baghdad's Sunni Arab residents tend to distrust the IP and do not feel protected unless U.S. soldiers, or at least the IA, are in the area. Thus, Multi-National Division-Baghdad (MND-B) surged more U.S. troops into the Sunni parts of the city to maintain order. Outside of Baghdad, public support for

BAGHDAD 00000646 002 OF 002

police remains largely positive.

¶7. (S//REL MNFI) Reports from Basrah were conflicting. MND-SE commanders evaluated ISF performance as largely positive and reported that the population saw the ISF clearly in the lead, demonstrating capabilities to maintain order in a sensitive situation. REO Basrah, however, noted a conspicuous absence of IP or IA in the first few days of the crisis; they apparently had abandoned the streets to Sadr militias who were out in force.

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COMMENT  
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¶8. (S//REL MNFI) COMMENT: The ISF acquitted themselves admirably during this crisis. Following their successful, albeit passive, performances in securing the referendum and elections, this was their first encounter with widespread public disorder and violence. The ISF rose to the occasion and -- without over-reacting or using heavy-handed tactics -- eased tensions, promoted general stability, and supported the politicians' efforts to show unity. The daytime curfew on Friday (February 24) was risky but effective, and the political leadership is now fully aware of the importance of accurate reporting of events and of squelching rumors and exaggeration.

¶9. (S//REL MNFI) COMMENT CONT'D: Nonetheless, the ISF still needed a huge push and material assistance from the U.S. and UK missions and from MNF-I. The ban of public display of weapons has yet to be implemented. To the upside, they also did not unnecessarily instigate further instability through confrontation with the militias. Such a confrontation with JAM or other militias may yet occur, however, if ISF and CF begin to enforce the ban on the public display of weapons.  
END COMMENT.  
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